

**Damian Caluori, *Plotinus on the Soul***, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 222 pp., ISBN 978-1-10-710595-9, £67.00.

Damian CALUORI's [= C.] book *Plotinus on the Soul* is a work concerning one of the most interesting, but, at the same time, most difficult, controversial and complex issues in Plotinus' philosophy. In the "Introduction" the author gives a short account of the problems pertaining to the soul within the Platonic tradition, presents the structure of his book and touches upon what he calls "systematic equivocity" in Plotinus' thinking (the use of one term for different, but connected objects). There is no discussion of the abundant secondary literature on the subject and the *status quaestionis*.

In the first chapter ("Unity and Creation: Why Plotinus Introduced the Hypostasis Soul"), C. gives some historical context for the problem of the nature of the soul, starting from Plato's *Timaeus*, but also points out other theories, both Platonic and from other schools (Pythagoreans, Stoics, etc.). The author states his preliminary views of the subject: all souls are one by virtue of the existence of Soul as hypostasis, which is not to be found in the realm of Intellect, but rather constitutes a distinct realm itself. Soul as such is to be distinguished not only from individual souls, but also from the World Soul. C. presents two reasons for introducing the hypostasis Soul, explaining individual agency and the existence of providence (found already in *Tim.* 39e).

In chapter two ("The Hypostasis Soul") those preliminary views are developed in more detail. The hypostasis Soul is identified with Plato's Craftsman (δημιουργός), responsible both for the creation of the world and the existence of providence. C. distinguishes between propositional and non-propositional thinking (the first belongs to the soul, the second, to the intellect) and insists that we also need to distinguish between discursive thinking (διάνοια) and discursive reasoning (λογισμός). Only the latter is a process in time, which we usually call "thinking", the first one is an atemporal but propositional grasp of the world of Forms. Another important dichotomy introduced by the author is that of theoretical vs. practical thinking. The first one is the intellectual contemplation of the Forms, the second one is divine providence, inclined to the material world.

Chapter three ("The Hypostasis Soul and its Relation to Individual Souls") deals with the question of the unity and multiplicity both in the realm of Intellect and of Soul. The author shows in what sense Intellect in Plotinus is one and there are also many individual intellects. Later, in a similar way he shows how the hypostasis Soul is one and there are also individual souls. The principle of multiplicity in those realms is what he calls "focus" – either on a particular Form in Intellect, or on a particular part of the material creation on the level of Soul.

In chapter four ("The Individual Soul in the Intelligible and in the Sensible World") C. concentrates on the twofold life of the each soul: contemplation of intelligible objects and its concern with the material realm. This is convincingly tied to Plotinian theory of the primary and secondary activity of each real being. Both in chapter three and in this chapter the historical context for the problems discussed is given.

Chapter five ("Divine Individual Souls") describes the nature and life of particular souls, such as the World Soul, the souls of the stars, planets and the earth. They also have to take care of some part of the material world, but their life is undisturbed and so they are not inclined to fall. The fall of the soul is the subject of the next chapter ("The Human Soul: Its Descent and its Confusion in the Sensible World"), where this phenomenon is called by the author the "descent of the soul". This descent is, C. argues, not an objective process or state, but only a subjective experience of the human soul. The reason for it is the fact that taking care of human bodies requires more attention to the senses and emotions than in the case of the divine souls. This amounts to the disastrous fall of human souls and the need for their purification.

Chapter seven ("The Human Soul: The Higher and the Lower Soul") deals with the activity of the human soul in the sensible, material world. C. explains what Plotinus calls the lower soul

(this part that is involved with the body) in terms not of a part of the soul, but of its power, projected into the material realm, without leaving the intelligible. The essence of this lower soul is the “faculty of presentation” (φανταστικόν) and it can be identified with the Stoic “ruling part” (ἡγεμονικόν). The relations of this lower soul to the World Soul is also discussed here.

The last chapter (“The Soul and the Body”) concerns the problem of mutual relationships between the soul and the body. C. explains what Plotinus means by his famous statement that the soul is not in the body, but the body is in the soul. He also discusses the part or rather the power of the soul that is called “nature”, its role and relation to the bodies. The book ends with a short section on the activity of the soul in animals and plants. There is no conclusion at the end.

C.’s book is an invaluable contribution to our understanding of Plotinus’ theory of the soul. Since BLUMENTHAL’S monograph<sup>1</sup> there has been no attempt to write a single work about the soul, even though there have been numerous highly significant papers on the issue. The author decided to leave aside problems of “the self” in Plotinus, hotly debated in recent years, as well as the problem of the purification of the soul and spiritual exercises. The result of his effort is a book of impressive clarity and order of thought. It reads very well and is almost austere in its focus. C. places the topics he discusses within their historical contexts, extending not only to classical schools of ancient thought, but also, for example, to Galen.

What seems to be lacking (although only from a certain perspective) is the author’s discussion of the secondary literature. The number of works is somehow overwhelming, but C.’s decision to leave aside scholarly debates is especially questionable when he deals with controversial problems of Plotinian scholarship, such as discursive vs. non-discursive thinking, descent vs. fall of the soul or the “double activity” of the soul in the intelligible and the sensible realm; or the concept of “presentation” (awareness, consciousness). C. gives his reasons, based on the analysis of Plotinian thought-structure (less on the analysis of actual texts), which are solid, but sometimes the reader who is not aware of the range of the debates on given issues might have the impression that C.’s views are natural interpretations of Plotinus’ texts. They are not, despite the quality of his scholarly skills and his erudition. There are, however, exceptions to this strategy, when the author identifies other interpretations and argues (more or less successfully) against them.

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<sup>1</sup> H.J. BLUMENTHAL, *Plotinus’ Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul*, The Hague 1971.